**BBC TWO unravels the secrets of Auschwitz**

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[[http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/images/pressreleases_images/print_icon.gif](http://www.bbc.co.uk/print/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2004/12_december/03/auschwitz_timeline.shtml)Printable version](http://www.bbc.co.uk/print/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2004/12_december/03/auschwitz_timeline.shtml)

**Auschwitz - a timeline**

**1933** Dachau, the first Nazi concentration camp, is established near Munich.

**May 1940** Rudolf Höss arrives in the Polish town of Oswiecim to create a new concentration camp on the site of a deserted Polish army barracks.

**14 June 1940** The first transport of Polish political prisoners arrives at Auschwitz.

**22 June 1941** Germany invades the Soviet Union. Special Nazi killing squads, the Einsatzgruppen, operate behind the German army in Russia, inciting pogroms against the Jews and murdering 'Jews in the service of the party or the state'.

**28 July 1941** Five hundred and seventy-five sick and disabled inmates at Auschwitz are selected for gassing. There is nowhere to kill them without disturbance, so they are sent back to Germany to be murdered there.

**14 August 1941** Himmler visits the headquarters of Einsatzgruppe B in Minsk and discovers that shooting women and children is causing some of his troops psychological damage. He contemplates other methods of killing Jews in the East.

**Autumn 1941** The first gassing experiments take place using Zyklon B, a powerful disinfectant, in order to exterminate supposed Soviet 'commissars' as well as those at the camp who are considered to be unfit for work.

**October-November 1941** Plans of the new camp extension at Birkenau are altered to exclude basic living space. 10,000 Soviet prisoners of war arrive to build the extension.

**November 1941** The first German Jews are deported to eastern Europe. Belzec, a small experimental gas camp, is used as a place to kill 'unproductive' Jews.

**20 January 1942** Senior Nazis meet at the Wannsee conference to co-ordinate the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question' and to agree a definition of 'Jew'.

**Spring 1942** The first large-scale gassing of Silesian Jews in Auschwitz-Birkenau takes place.

**20 June 1942** Prisoner Kazimierz Piechowski escapes from Auschwitz with three other prisoners, dressed as SS men.

**2 July 1942** In France, the Vichy Government agrees that gendarmes will co-operate in rounding up foreign Jews throughout France, provided Jews with French citizenship are allowed to remain.

**19 July 1942** Himmler orders the General Government (eastern Poland) to be 'cleansed' of Jews by the end of the year.

**Summer 1942** The hot summer has rotted thousands of corpses. Höss visits Chelmno to inspect machinery for incinerating bodies.

**March 1943**  The new crematoria are put into operation at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

**May 1943** Dr Josef Mengele joins Auschwitz as camp physician and begins to carry out experiments on inmates.

**October 1943** The heads of the Danish churches publish a strong protest against Nazi treatment of Jews. Danish social and economic organisations and King Christian X also object strongly, and universities close for a week in protest.

**Autumn 1943** The war is not going well for Nazi Germany and some other countries, such as Bulgaria and Romania, resist handing over their Jews.

**14 October 1943** Half of the 600 Jews in Sobibor concentration camp manage to escape on one day. Fifty of them evade capture and survive the war.

**17 March 1944** Hitler orders the occupation of Hungary, fearing that the Hungarians might be thinking of changing sides. Jewish deportations begin under Adolf Eichmann.

**31 May 1944** A meeting of the British War Cabinet Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of Refugees discusses Eichmann's 'goods for blood' offer of swapping Jewish prisoners for money. The committee recommends that the Cabinet rejects his offer.

**24 June 1944** The most detailed news yet about the mass gassings of Jews reaches the US War Department. It is based on reports from a number of escaped prisoners.

**30 June 1944** A train takes 1,684 to freedom, brokered directly between Eichmann and Jewish organisers. The Nazis charge $1,000 per head for the places. The train eventually makes it to Switzerland and freedom.

**2 August 1944**  The Gypsy camp at Auschwitz is liquidated.

**7 October 1944** The Sonderkommando in Crematorium IV of Auschwitz instigates a revolt, and is later joined by those from Crematorium II. They are brutally put down by the SS.

**27 January 1945** The Red Army liberates Auschwitz-Birkenau and its remaining 7,000 prisoners.

**12 March 1945**  Himmler signs an agreement not to pass on Hitler's order to destroy all concentration camps and kill all prisoners. In early April, against Hitler's express wishes, he permits the Allies to take Bergen.